

absolute science. For this result, thanks are  
mainly due  
to the Webbs. The steady pressure of their  
practice,  
even more than their intellectual modesty,  
has brought  
it about.

It is not by accident but by intention that  
their descrip-  
tion of themselves is always that they are  
sociologists.  
The very latest of their published works—the  
fascinating  
volume in which "after forty-five years of  
investigation  
into social institutions the authors publish, for  
the assistance  
of other students, a detailed account of the  
methods they  
have found successful" —is called *Methods of  
Social Study*.  
Of Social, not of Economic Study. The  
cover, except  
for the series of volumes penned to advocate  
the proposals  
contained in the Minority Report of the Poor  
Law Com-  
mission, and *A Constitution for the Socialist  
Commonwealth*  
which are constructive Socialism and  
*The Decay of the  
Capitalist System*, which is destructive Socialism  
(and unique,  
being thus minatory and negative) the  
books which  
comprise the great body of their work are  
descriptive,  
rather than, in any sense, doctrinal. They  
are doctrinal  
only in so far as they are grounded in, and  
interpenetrated  
by, a rejection of commonly accepted  
doctrine so com-  
monly accepted, indeed so universally taken  
for granted,  
when they began their work, that nobody  
noticed that  
it was doctrine at all. Of this common  
acceptance of  
Capitalist assumptions, then books have been  
profoundly

sub\ersi\e      Here were two students,  
equipped as were  
few, armed at e\ery point with knowledge  
both of fact  
and of theory, trained and disciplined to the  
highest point,  
whose works, looking, to the casual eye,  
just like any  
other solid sociological treatises, ready to pass,  
on approval,  
into text-books, proved, when their content  
was reflected  
upon, to challenge orthodoxy at every point  
on the line,  
and to challenge it by no crude frontal  
assault but by  
an insistence on enquiring whether the  
things it took